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FOCUS 21: EXPANDING TO THE EDGES OF THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE

by Harriet H. Carter, JD

Professional Member Harriet Carter is a full-time attorney specializing in tax law and a part-time researcher in after-death communications and altered states of consciousness. "Guided Tour to the Afterlife" is her firsthand account of her friend's death and the adventures that followed. Her intense Gateway Voyage experiences in August 1999, described herein the edited version of her journal entries, almost convinced her that an NDE was imminent.

Today, the energy and the routine of our activity shifted into reverse. The morning started out in David Francis Hall, where we usually end up in the evening. Our Gateway group was in the lecture hall to see the film "Powers of Ten." The first scene showed a couple lying on a picnic blanket in a Chicago park. Then the camera zoomed back in increments of 10 percent, all the way out to the edge of the known physical universe. At that point, it reversed direction and—keeping the same momentum—zoomed in on the man's hand and continued inward, down to the level of an atom inside the skin.

I was fascinated. We live our lives focused primarily in an extremely small slice of physical space spanning the surface of our skins. As infinitely large as the physical universe seems to be, however, there is an infinitely larger nonphysical universe surrounding it—both outward and inward—into which we can expand our consciousness. Through that shift in perspective, I realized that "Powers of Ten" was a metaphor for Robert A. Monroe's lifework and the mission of the Institute that is his legacy.

The film was a fitting prelude to the first of the three tapes scheduled for that Wednesday morning: a tape designed to send us into the silence of self. I didn't know if I could stand three successive sessions, so I told Karen Malik, our trainer, that I might take a solo break at the lake after session one.

In Focus 21 we were asked to expand our consciousness to the edge of the physical universe and beyond. I found myself holding the entire physical universe in my hand! That image, and the associated expansion of consciousness, didn't bother me as much as an intense feeling that the entire universe was now within my body. My ego and body panicked together. All of my cells felt as if they were being stretched in every direction at once on a medieval torture rack, and my whole body seemed to be flailing around in explosive paroxysms. "You call this deep relaxation?" I thought to myself.

My frightening, jolting movement through a psychedelic starfield resembled the trip that Jodie Foster took in [the movie] "Contact." Another scene was analogous to [a scene in the movie]

“Flatliners,” in which the researcher took himself to the edge of death to get a glimpse into the realms beyond while hoping that his compadres would slap the defibrillator onto his chest before the point of no return. My personal defibrillator arrived in the nick of time in the form of a voice, that of my friend and soulmate, Bob Monroe, who gently brought me back down to Focus 10. I finally relaxed with the thought that I had once again defied the death and destruction of my body.

Tears started to flow just before Bob rescued me. How could I ever get through the levels beyond Focus 21 intact? It felt as though I’d almost had a heart attack or a stroke. So, immediately after leaving my CHEC unit I took my blood pressure. It was 122/81 with a pulse rate of 72. Either the racing heart was all in my mind or else the energy had been released by that earlier volcanic eruption! Even so, I still couldn’t stop crying.

Then it struck me that my cataclysmic experience was connected to the dream that had awakened me earlier that morning—a dream that had played itself out backward just like the day’s routine. The dream had “clicked” from a scene with practically the whole state of Maryland on fire ... to a whole residential neighborhood in flames ... to a house engulfed ... to a child in the house with a little black and white dog (just before the dog accidentally started the fire) ... to the contractor building the house (knowing how the story was going to turn out and trying to change the course of events by making the house fireproof). I was mirrored in every element of the dream.

What symbology: fire of passion and anger and violent cleansing; house as the physical container for the soul; child and dog as innocence, spontaneity, creativity, and playfulness; and the creator of the entire reality trying to rewrite the story. The dream also resonated with the last tape exercise on Tuesday evening. We were to pull our greatest fear out of the Energy Conversion Box, identify and feel the attendant emotions, and rewrite whatever frightening story had shut down our souls.

A couple of hours later, I sat under the maple trees and looked out over Lake Miranon. The crying had finally stopped, and I felt soothed, nurtured, and surrounded by peacefulness and love. Two dogs wandered by, sniffing their way around, and fully enjoying each moment in the eternal Here/Now.

After that pleasant little diversion, I refocused on my own situation. Just sitting by the lake with an opportunity to regroup represented a major change in a pattern going back to early childhood. My supersensitive soul had been devastated countless times by some event that threatened to kill my body. Yet either my peers, or authority figures, or the rule of form over function forced me to stay with the routine and to minimize or ignore the attack. Tears welled up again as I grieved for the panic-stricken child within beseeching somebody—anybody, please, oh please!—to protect its battered soul.

Today, I stated my intention to care for myself and put my need for sanctuary in nature ahead of the morning agenda. Miraculously, I was supported (even blessed) by both trainers to go and to report back after processing. A major fear—that of disapproval—had been released from my Energy Conversion Box. I saw the many past occasions when brutal violation had been the price for daring to honor my own needs over accepted protocol. By honoring myself today and being supported in that choice, I learned that it was safe and acceptable to put myself first.

This story has a truly happy ending. By leaving the scene of the trauma for a few hours of restoration in nature, my first exposure to Focus 21 ultimately served as a cosmic and psychic roto-rooter. It cleared out the “gunk” in my energetic plumbing so higher energy frequencies could run through me more smoothly later that afternoon. When I mustered up the courage to climb back into my CHEC unit and revisit Focus 21, I quickly discovered that the energy of 21 could be used to speed manifestation of my desires in the outer physical world. Thus, while Focus 21 originally left a bitter aftertaste, it eventually became an acquired taste.

Perhaps “No pain, no gain,” really is true. In any event—to quote the indigenous peoples—"That’s a healing story.”